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596 and protection of the thousand households.

D. Economic Role

596 As the definition of the term "family" infers, it was the basic economic unit of the society. Real property such as land, houses, and workshops were owned by the family rather than by individuals. When disharmony caused the breakup of a joint family, its real property was divided among the constituent conjugal families, each as a new family claiming title to the portion of property which fell to its share.

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462 The peasant, artisan, and small-merchant families were units of both production and consumption. Male family members worked together in the fields, workshops, or stores to produce the goods on which the family mainly relied for a living. Sons nearly alway followed their father's occupation and seldom left home. Women worked in the home, taking care of the children and turning out the family's clothes and shoes. Where sericulture was practiced, women managed the entire industry from the cultivation of mulberry trees to the weaving of cloth. Food and clothing were allotted each member according to his needs, as they were determined by the head of the house and permitted by the family's circumstances.

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669 To help traditionally-minded families attain the new Communist-established goal of "democracy" and "harmony," family "struggle" meetings were arranged under cadre supervision. Each member was pressed to confess his own past sins and suffering and to help other family members to remember theirs. The particular transgressions sought out for exposure, condemnation, redress, and rectification were the mistreatment and beating of wives by husbands, similar behavior by mothers-in-law against daughters-in-law, and interference by parents in young people's free choice of marriage partners. Much was made in the Communist press of the suicides or murder of women and young people, attributed to the old feudal system of marriage."[12]

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462 Whatever the humanitarian by-products, the Marriage Law aimed at a basic change in Chinese society with two utilitarian purpose in view. One was to change the popular basis of loyalty from the family to the state. The other was to free the Chinese woman from her preoccupation with the home and children so that she might become a laborer in the field and factory. These aims were quite openly expressed.

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12. See especially C.B., 273, pp. 1-3; 236, pp. 4-14; and Survey of the China Mainland Press, Hong Kong, American Consulate, 932, p. iv; hereafter cited as S.C.M.P. The same conditions apply to this source as to Current Background; see footnote 8.

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462 For instance, an article in the Peking Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao [China Youth] on the correct attitude toward parents, asserts that under the Confucian system with its emphases on filial piety, parents had the right to regard their children as private property and demand sacrifices of them. Under the new regime, the article pointed out, "children are not the private property of their parents, but belong first of all to the state and to the people, and... the interests of the people should be the highest criterion governing our actions toward our parents."[13]

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668 An editorial in the People's Daily in March 1955 notes that remnant feudal ideologies still obstructed "the participation of women in Socialist construction and various political activities." The editorial then goes on to state that it is in order to promote the political and production zeal of women that their rights must be promoted and protected and the Marriage Law implemented.[14] Various comments on the Marriage Law inspired by the regime stress Lenin's dictum that sex relationships and family problems are not individual or small affairs but matters of great social, economic, and political significance.

13. S.C.M.P., 973, p. 31.
14. Ibid., 106, p. 15.